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MINUTES
OF THE
STATE CONVENTION
OF THE
BAPTIST DENOMINATION,
In South-Carolina.

Held in the Village of Edgefield, November 29th, and continued to December the 3d, 1823.



1. The Saturday and Sabbath were employed, as usual, in acts of public devotion.

1. On Monday at 11 o'clock, A. M. the Rev. W. B. Johnson delivered the sermon introductory to business, from Mark, x. 15—"Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature."

3. Received and read letters from the Charleston, Edgefield, Savannah River, and Saluda Associations, presented by their delegates; viz. :—From the Charleston. Richard Furman, William Dossey, Joseph B. Cook, Jesse Hartwell, Robert Missildine, George Scott, Joseph Pack, jr. and John F. Wilson. From the Edgefield, John Landrum, Samuel Cartlidge, Richard M. Todd, James M. Scott, Basil Manly, and Abner Blocker. From the Savannah River, James Wilson, Darling Peeples, James Graham, Benjamin S. Screven, Hansford D. Duncan, Thomas Gillison, Winborn A. Lawton, and Francis B. Baker. From the Saluda, William B. Johnson, James Crowther, Alexander Patterson, Lewis Rector, Arthur Williams, and Nathan Berry. From the Fellowship Benevolent Society, Auxiliary to the State Convention, Charles D. Mallory.

John F. Wilson from the Charleston, Hansford D. Duncan from the Savannah River, and Alexander Patterson, Lewis Rector, Arthur Williams, and Nathan Berry, from the Saluda Association, failed to give their attendance.

4. Elected Rev. Dr. Furman Presid. A. Rev. William B. Johnson Vice-President, Rev. Basil Manly Secretary, and Col. Abner Blocker Treasurer.

5. Received a letter of correspondence from the General Association of Baptists in the State of Georgia, by their representatives, the Rev. Messrs. Jesse Mercer, and William T. Brantly; who were very cordially welcomed to a seat in the convention.

6. Read the minutes of this body at its last session.

7. Agreed that the President be authorized to invite all regular Ministers present, both of our own and other denominations, whose general sentiments are in accordance with ours—the Deacons of the church in this place, and such private members of our churches as he may think proper, to take a seat with us, and a part in our deliberations.

8. The President reported on the subject of the duty assigned him, in the 12th Article of our last minutes, that he had waited on His Excellency the Governor of this State, with the Convention's Address, containing a request for the appointment of a day of public humiliation, thanksgiving and prayer; which, by a pleasing coincidence, he was enabled to do, in company with the agent of our Presbyterian brethren for the same object: And that as soon as his leisure permitted, he had also submitted to His Excellency, in a subsequent address, an exposition of the views of the denomination on the lawfulness of holding slaves, and the right policy to be observed with respect to them, as agreed upon in the last regular meeting of this body; a copy of which was read in the convention.

Whereupon, it was *unanimously resolved*, That the thanks of this body be presented to its venerable President, for the very able and satisfactory manner in which he has discharged the delicate and important duty committed to his trust. Also that Rev. Mr. Johnson be requested to take measures for publishing in the Southern Intelligencer, the above-named exposition—and also for proposing its publication in the Columbian Star, if judged proper by the editor.

9. Agreed to make the consideration of the subjects proposed by our Georgia brethren the order of the day for to-morrow. Rev. Mr. Mercer prayed, and the convention adjourned to Tuesday morning 9 o'clock.

Met according to adjournment—Rev. Mr. Dossey prayed.

10. Preparatory to the business appointed as the order of the day, the minutes and corresponding letter of the General Association of Baptists in the State of Georgia were read: Whereupon the representatives of that body were requested to make any communication which they had in charge. A discussion arose on the construction of the third article of our Constitution, in which, finally, it was mutually understood, both on the part of the convention and of the delegates from Georgia, that the Seminary of Learning contemplated, should be situated in this state, and embrace ultimately, a general course of literature, scientific and classical; as well as a suitable course of Theological instruction: and that it would be proper to make some explanatory remarks with respect to the government under which the institution will be placed; and to evince the friendly regard we entertain for other institutions designed to promote the interests of learning and religion.

11. The foregoing discussion led also, to the presentment and adoption of the following resolutions :—

Resolved, That it is expedient to take immediate measures for the establishment and operation of the Literary Institution proposed to be established by the convention in this state, on the plan exhibited in the following Article of our Constitution, viz. :—" Should the General Association of Georgia, or other religious body or bodies out of this state; become united with this convention in establishing a Seminary of Learning, of the character before described in these rules, it is hereby agreed and stipulated, that the support and government of such institution shall be conducted in concert with them, on a plan of just reciprocity and brotherly affection.

Resolved, That the institution shall embrace in its course of instruction, the ordinary branches taught in a classical school, and also, such as may assist young men designed for the Gospel Ministry, in the study of divinity.

Resolved, That a committee be appointed to confer with a committee of the General Association of Georgia, in relation to a site for the institution, within thirty miles of Augusta, and to the general course of studies ; and report at the next meeting of the convention.

Resolved, That agents be appointed to collect moneys, by which a fund may be formed for establishing and bringing this proposed Literary Institution into operation. To carry into effect the design of the two last resolutions—it was agreed, that the committee to confer with our Georgia brethren on the abovementioned subjects, consist of the following brethren, viz. :—Thomas Gillison, John Landrum, Abner Blocker, W. B. Johnson, and B. Manly.

Also, that the following brethren be Collecting Agents, viz. :—In the Savannah River Association ; James Wilson, Jennings O'Bannon, Winborn A. Lawton, Benjamin H. Buckner, James Graham, Benjamin S. Screven, and Dr. John F. Fowke.

In the Charleston Association ; Richard Furman, Jesse Hartwell, Joseph B. Cook, John F. Wilson, Aaron Marvin, Timothy Dargan, Shubel Blanding, George Scott, George Bruce, and Joseph Pack, jr.

In the Edgefield ; Abner Blocker, Matthew Mims, John T. Coleman, John Chiles, James Head, Samuel Cartledge, James M. Scott, and James Bell.

In the Saluda ; William B. Johnson, James Crowther, Lewis Rector, James Harper, and Nathan Berry. Also, Col. Joseph Gist, and Col. John McCreary, in connexion with the Bethel.

12. From the Georgia General Association was received also, a communication relative to the propriety of forming, with the concurrent assistance of the denomination at large, a general and standard confession of faith, discipline, catechism, forms of ordination, and the constitution of churches, which might be more deserving of general approbation and acceptance, than any heretofore published. Agreed to postpone the consideration of this subject.

Rev. Mr. Graham prayed, and the convention adjourned to 6 o'clock

this evening—Met according to adjournment, prayer by Rev. Mr. Johnson.

13. Resolved, That the Collecting Agents be authorized to pursue the best plan their judgment may suggest, for carrying into effect the duties of their appointment. And that they be requested to report and pay over to the Treasurer of this body, at its next regular stated meeting, all the moneys which may be in their hands.

14. Resolved, That the Board of Agents be elected only at the regular stated meetings of this body. And that Rev. Dr. Furman, with Rev. Messrs. Cook, and Johnson, be a committee to form Rules for the government of the Board of Managers, and report at our next meeting.

15. Elected the following Brethren Agents, viz. :—Joseph B. Cook, William Dossey, Thomas Gillison, John Landrum, Benjamin S. Screven, and James Graham, who, together with the officers of the convention, shall form our Board of Managers for the ensuing year.

16. The Rev. Messrs. Johnson and Cook, in behalf of themselves and other brethren, appointed at the last meeting, to attend the different Associations in this state which were not included in this convention, with a view of explaining to them our objects and intentions, reported how far they had discharged their duty, and with what visible effect.

Whereupon it was Resolved, That it is expedient to explain still further to those bodies, the true objects of the convention, and to testify to them our friendly regard : And for this purpose it was agreed that the brethren Johnson and Gibson, be our messengers to the Broad River Association, Peebles and Missildine to the Bethel, and Dossey and Ellis to the Moriah.

17. Read and adopted the address to our constituents, as prepared by the Secretary.

Rev. G. Scott prayed, and the convention adjourned to to-morrow morning 9 o'clock.

Met according to adjournment—Prayer by Rev. Mr. Cook.

18. Appointed the following brethren to be a committee to receive and report the moneys sent up for different objects to this body, viz. : Gillison, Blocker and Pack.

19. Resolved, That as doubts have been suggested, (probably by persons not well informed of circumstances,) concerning the uprightness of Societies, Missionaries, and Agents of our connexion, in their use of moneys, which they have been concerned in collecting and applying to missionary and other important purposes, for the furtherance of the Gospel ;—as the public have a right to regular and candid information on a subject in which their liberality is concerned ;—and as jealousies, when entertained and expressed on this subject, without just reason, are not generous, but tend to bring unmerited reproach on good men, to injure the cause of religion, and to arrest the hand of public beneficence, so as to prevent the performance of those works of piety and benevolence which are most pleasing to God, and interesting to men : Therefore, we think it incumbent on us to state, for the

satisfaction of the Churches, and of the community at large—That it has been the serious concern of the Baptist General Convention in the United States, from the first, as it has of public bodies connected with them in general, to have their money transactions so conducted, that abuses might be prevented, uprightness and fidelity preserved, and the evidence of this uprightness clearly exhibited.

On this plan they have formed their records, which specify these transactions; and are accessible to free inquiry. Their general accounts are published officially: And those of their agents employed in soliciting contributions, which have also been published, contain both the names of the benefactors, and the sums they have contributed: So that were there concealment or misrepresentation practised, it might be easily detected.

This line of upright conduct, we are also assured, has been pursued by the Baptists in England, in support of their important mission to India: and it is *that* which we, as a convention, mean to pursue.

Beholding imposition in every view, but especially in such an undertaking as this, with contempt and abhorrence, we are not disposed to shrink from investigation; but, on the contrary, we invite it; and should it be found, that any Society connected with us, or Agent employed in the service under consideration, has acted a dishonest, or unfair part, we will thank the man who shall make the discovery. But we trust, inquiry would produce justification.

Had the true state of the Missionary establishment at Serampore been generally known here, it is highly probable, that the persons who have suggested things of an unfavourable nature with respect to those venerable men, the Rev. Drs. Carey and Marshman, and the late Rev. Dr. Ward, would have considered them as the proper objects of their highest esteem and admiration, rather than of their censure: When they had considered, that instead of deceiving the public, flattering upon the spoils of charity, and living lives of vain pomp and luxury; they were, with indefatigable zeal and labour, employed in translating and publishing the sacred Scriptures, (effected either in whole or in part,) into more than thirty languages of Eastern Asia (including the learned Sanskrit, and the Chinese;) preaching to the natives in some of those languages, the glad tidings of Salvation; establishing missionary stations in many parts of the widely extended country of India, and providing them with pious instructors; and founding and supporting schools at those stations, in which thousands of ignorant Heathen children are taught the rudiments of useful knowledge, and brought to an acquaintance with the word of God, the Bible: And at the same time, not only supporting themselves, but contributing a yearly sum of more than a thousand pounds sterling *each* to the general fund of the institution. Which last fact was officially stated by the late Rev. and excellent Dr. Fuller, as Secretary to the Guardian Society in England, a little before his death. This they were enabled to do by the personal employments in which, with a view to the benefit of the mission, they engaged. Dr. Carey, as a Professor in the College of Calcutta, under the government, with a salary of 1500*l.* sterling—Dr. Marsh-

man, as Head Master in the Schools instituted for the promotion of polite as well as useful literature ; in which both male and female youth were instructed, and in which Mrs. Marshman performed an important part ; and Dr. Ward, as superintendant and conductor of the very extensive Printing Establishment at Serampore. And especially, would they have esteemed them, when they had seen that the magnanimity, uprightness, modesty, and whole moral worth of these missionaries, as well as their learning, piety, and zeal, have been testified, not only by many intelligent individuals of undoubted probity, who have visited India, both from Europe and America ; but by the Rev. Dr. Buchanan, of the Episcopal Church, who as Vice-Provost of the College at Calcutta, was for many years intimately connected with Dr. Carey in that institution ; by the Danish Governor of Serampore ; by the British Governors General at Bengal ; and by that magnanimous body of men, the British and Foreign Bible Society, which unites in its membership, a great proportion of the Nobility, Clergy, and Literati of Great-Britain ; to whom every source of genuiue information on the subject is open.

20. Resolved, That it is expedient to explain in these minutes, the 9th and 11th Articles of our Constitution, in the true sense of the convention, viz :—That the “ Exclusive Right ” in the 9th, applies to Churches individually ; and the words “ obligations to afford aid ” in the 11th, to the convention ; and not to the churches.

The Rev. B. S. Screven also gave notice to the convention, that at the next meeting he would move to alter the phraseology of those articles, so as to correspond more clearly with the explanations proposed.

21. Accepted the report of the committee appointed to receive the contributions sent up to this body.

22. Committed to the Board of Managers the propriety of employing a domestic missionary, to devote his time to the business of preaching the Gospel, and making collections in aid of our funds, so far as they may be enabled by the funds sent up for that purpose.

23. Resolved, That the next meeting of this body be held in the Village of Coosawhatchie, on the Saturday before the 1st Sabbath in December, A. D. 1824.

24. Resolved, That it is expedient in future for the delegates of this body, to collect all information relating to the number of ministers, churches, and members in fellowship. The state of religion in the bounds of their respective associations, and such other subjects as may be interesting or important to be known—and that they present for insertion in the minutes a succinct statement embodying such information.

25. Resolved, that a Charity Sermon be preached on the Lord's day of our next meeting, and that a collection be taken immediately afterward, in aid of the funds of the convention. Rev. Mr. Johnson was appointed to this service.

Also Agreed, that immediately after sermon on Saturday, the convention be organized ; that the Lord's Supper be administered on the

Sabbath ; and that the Convention Sermon be preached on Monday morning before the Delegates. Rev. Mr. Manly to begin worship on Saturday, in case of failure, Rev. Mr. Cook. Rev. Dr. Furman to preach the Convention Sermon, in case of failure Rev. Mr. Graham.

26. Appointed our brethren W. B. Johnson, and B. Manly, as our messengers to the General Association of Baptists in Georgia.

27. Appointed our brother Cook to prepare the next address to our constituents.

28. Unanimously Resolved, That the cordial thanks of this body be presented to the friendly, hospitable inhabitants of this Village and its vicinity, for their kind and polite reception of its members and friends.

29. Appointed the Secretary to furnish special letters of correspondence to the delegates appointed from this body to associations in this state.

30. Requested the President to superintend the printing and distribution of these minutes and the accompanying papers, designed for publication.

The President affectionately addressed the members of the convention, and adjourned the meeting by solemn prayer and the Christian benediction.



General State of the Associations

UNITED IN THE CONVENTION.

Charleston Association contains 37 Churches, 18 ordained Ministers, and 4 who are licenced. Their number of Communicants, according to the return of the present year, is 3895. The number Baptized in 12 months, immediately preceding their late meeting in November, is 213. Their next annual meeting will be at Society Hill, Darlington District, the Saturday before the first Sabbath in November 1824 ; Rev. Mr. Cook to preach the Association Sermon, in case of his failure, Rev. Mr. Dossey.

The Edgefield Association contains 36 Churches, 15 ordained Ministers, 3 Licenced Preachers, and 1897 Communicants. In the last year, 280 persons were admitted into their Churches by Baptism. Their next annual meeting is to be on the Saturday before the third Lord's day in Sept. 1824, at the Bethany Church, at a place called the Republican. Rev. Richard M. Todd to preach the Introductory Sermon, in case of failure, Rev. Basil Manly.

The Savannah River Association contains 24 Churches, 11 Ordained Ministers, and 6 Licenced Preachers. The number of Communicants 2795. 105 were received into their Churches by Baptism in the course of the year ending with their late meeting. Their next meeting will be at Barnwell Church, near the Court-House, the Thursday before the 4th Sabbath in November 1824 ; Rev. Mr. Graham to preach the Introductory Sermon, in case of failure, Rev. Mr. Lugg.

The Saluda Association contains 33 Churches, 16 Ordained Ministers, and 2 Licenced Preachers, and 1388 Communicants. They had 76 Members added to them by Baptism in the year preceding the 9th of

August 1823 ; at which time they agreed to join the Convention. Their next meeting is to be held at Lebanon Meeting House, three miles from Pendleton Court-House ; the time is not mentioned in their minutes, (it is supposed to be the 2d Sabbath in August, the time of their last meeting ;) Rev. A. Williams to preach the Introductory Sermon ; in case of failure, Rev. Wm. B. Johnson.



STATEMENT,

*Reported by the Committee appointed to receive Moneys,
which had been sent up to the Convention.*

EDUCATION FUND.

Charleston Association,	\$75 00
Edgefield Do.	46 50
Horn's Creek Church,	29 75
Red Bank Church,	14 68 $\frac{3}{4}$
Mount Moriah Church,	10 00
Rev. Mr. James M. Scott,	5 00
Children of Edgefield Sabbath School,	7 00
Savannah River Association,	24 42 $\frac{1}{2}$
Collection on Monday after the Convention Sermon,	98 57 $\frac{1}{2}$
	—————\$310 93 $\frac{3}{4}$

FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS.

Charleston Association,	\$75 00
Edgefield Do.	16 00
Fellowship Benevolent Society,	20 00
Rev. J. M. Scott,	2 50
	—————\$113 50

FOR DOMESTIC MISSIONS.

Charleston Association,	\$50 00
Edgefield Do.	70 07
Big Stephen's Creek Church,	7 62 $\frac{1}{2}$
Fellowship Benevolent Society,	20 00
Mrs. Eliza Wigfall,	5 00
Master S. T. Wigfall,	12 $\frac{1}{2}$
Savannah River Association,	24 42
An unknown friend by hands of Rev. Mr. Graham,	9 50
Pious Colored Persons, by Rev. Mr. Screven,	4 43 $\frac{3}{4}$
	—————\$191 17 $\frac{3}{4}$

FOR GENERAL PURPOSES.

Savannah River Association,	\$5 00
The Fellowship Benevolent Society,	40 00
	—————\$45 00
	—————\$660 61 $\frac{1}{2}$

ADDRESS TO THE CHURCHES.

The State Convention of the Baptist Denomination, in South-Carolina, to their Brethren throughout the State, send Christian salutation.

BELOVED BRETHREN,

THE union of Baptists in a State Convention, though recently entered into, has already been so much the subject of explanation and argument, as to render it extremely difficult to accommodate our remarks to the existing opinions and feelings of our brethren and friends in regard to it.

Objections, so far as they exist, are usually so retiring, so peculiar to their authors, and consequently so various, that to attempt their removal, in an address of this sort, would be a vain and endless task. But let not any objector boast in his retirement, as though he had found the deformity which we are afraid to touch. His objection, indeed, may remain unnoticed. It may be such as he might find answered, if he would examine, in some of our former minutes or addresses—such as a little information of the true nature and objects of the convention; a little thought and reflection; or above all, a little of the heaven of Divine Grace would remove. He must not expect us to prescribe for him, without knowing his case. Or, be it so, that his objection is of the greatest weight, we are not afraid to meet it. As we have never acted in this business without much circumspection, serious inquiry, and solemn prayer for the Divine direction and support, so, in the same spirit, should the righteous find us erring and smite us, it shall be a kindness.

But whatever objections may be against the convention or its measures, we are certain that the objects to which it proposes to devote an humble instrumentality, shall be finally accomplished. 'God that cannot lie' has secured them with the word of promise. The Lord Jesus is to see a numerous seed, Is. liii. 10. To inherit the Heathen, and to possess the uttermost parts of the earth, Ps. ii. 8. All the kindreds of the nations are to worship Him, Ps. xxii. 27. And all flesh to see the salvation of God, Luke iii. 6. Peace, union, and harmony shall abound, Isa. xi. 6, 9. Ministers are to run to and fro, and knowledge is to be increased, Dan. xii. 4; until the human mind, from infancy to age, shall be enveloped in a flood of light, and require instruction no longer; for all shall know the Lord, from the least unto the greatest, Jer. xxxi. 33, 34. Isa. xi. 9. Should it ultimately prove, therefore, that the efforts of this convention make no part of the grand scheme of Providence in relation to these purposes, ours will be the joy, at least, to stand at length upon the mountains of Zion in the full enjoyment of our glorious hopes.

But besides these express indications of God's absolute purpose, we have other promises in the word, in which there is an interesting peculiarity. These are the promises which are implied in the prayers and labors of the Saints, (for christian prayers and wishes necessarily

include corresponding efforts, James ii. 15, 17, and Luke vi. 46) under the teaching of Christ and the influence of his spirit. We are instructed to pray for the coming of Christ's kingdom for the performance of his will on earth, as it is done in Heaven, and for the sending forth of labourers into his harvest, Mat. vi. 10, and ix. 38. St. Paul requested his brethren, 2 Thes. iii. 1, to pray for him and his companions, that the word through them might have free course and be glorified; a prayer of permanent obligation on all the servants of Christ in behalf of all his ministers. Gospel Ministers are reminded in the credentials which they have from Heaven, Mark xvi. 15, that all the world is the field of their labor, and that the last man is to be their last hearer. In the discharge of their duty they are warned against the neglect of the gift that is in them; commanded to give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine; and with meditation and study, to make it the object of their exclusive endeavour to shew themselves workmen, approved unto God, that need not to be ashamed, 1 Tim. iv. 13, 16; and 2 Tim. ii. 15. Now, these commands show, that the objects to be sought are among the gifts and rewards of grace, and are of course attainable (unless we can suppose that God would mock and tantalize his worshipping people :) If attainable, they are proposed to our *faith and hope* in the path of obedience, as prescribed. But Gospel faith and hope, in order to their very existence, necessarily pre-suppose some *promise* of Divine grace, either *expressed* or *implied*—Ps. cxix. 49. 2 Sam. vii. 27. Here then are implied promises; and the peculiarity referred to, is, that they connect the purpose and glory of God with the desires and services of his creatures. They declare his design and will, and admit us, unworthy as we are, to be co-workers together with him. They exhibit to us our promising God, in his transcendent majesty, revealing to his prostrate and transported servant, things to come; and also as a husbandman hiring labourers into his vineyard, and distributing to each his labor and reward. For, they not only lead us to expect the existence of the things commanded, as subjects of implied promise, so long as the spirit of prayer and obedience shall remain; but also engage our labors under the most animating encouragements.

From this class of the promises (we delight to consider them in that character) originates christian obligation. *Obligation to act*. On which subject the urgent inquiry of every conscientious man will be, *In what capacity? And under what limitations?* What is there in my nature and circumstances that can meet the will of God, and be turned to good account in the activity and privations of required service? And what are the rules which should govern my conduct?

On the former of these inquiries a most extensive field opens before us. The glory of the most perfect being is undoubtedly the highest end and interest of all intelligences. The creator and his creatures. That infinite wisdom should have formed our *whole nature* in perfect harmony with that end, therefore, is evident: And our responsibility in regard to it, extends to all those acts and occasions wherein that nature may be perverted from its original design, wherein we can become the objects of praise or censure. From the powers of mind

which God has given us, natural and moral, their ceaseless activity—their connexion with beings around us, and their influence over them, we cannot conceive of any state or circumstances of a living reasoning man, in which he will not encounter an important responsibility. What power of the mind or body is exempt? What exercise of our perceptive judgment or reasoning; of the will or affections? What circumstance of natural endowment or spiritual gifts; of civil, domestic, or personal relations? Of opportunity, reputation, influence, or estate?—On the rapid succession of our thoughts when they fly amid world and spheres, and the bright orders of immortal spirits, this principle lays its stern restrictions; while, at the same time, it asserts unquestionable authority over the whole dominion both of soul and body, silencing ungrateful nature with the claims of redeeming love, 1 Cor. vi. 20. It is the instrument which pre-engages our best services and highest love for God, from all that may solicit them besides in infinite space; and holds the supreme title to all that we possess:—"The silver is mine, and the gold is mine; and what hast thou which thou didst not receive?" Haggai ii. 8. 1 Cor. iv. 7—also, 1 Cor. vi. 20. Prov. iii. 9, 10. 1 Cor. x. 31—and Job xli. 11.

But that our ideas of obligation may be enlightened and consistent in their exercise, they require direction and limits. The will of God both originates and directs human obligations; and it is either expressly revealed in his word, or discerned by the lights of nature in a manner not contrary to, nor inconsistent with the Scriptures. What then, is the line of direction furnished by the word and will of God in relation to the present purpose?

1. They bind us to the use of right means in the pursuit of right ends—2 Tim. ii. 5.

Sometimes in the Scriptures God has annexed to certain ends, the means and methods by which he would have them pursued; and when an indication of this sort is given, either in precept or example, in reference to a moral duty or a positive institution, the laws of prudence, as well as of obedience and love, require a scrupulous adherence. Of this the disobedience and punishment of Moses and Uzzrah, of Saul, and of Nadab and Abihu, furnish awful proof. See Deut. xxxii. 51—2 Sam. vi. 11.—1 Sam. xv. 21, 23—and Levit. x. 1, 2, 3.

But there are many duties enjoined in general directions, when no particular means are specified. Such are, assembling together for worship, Heb. x. 25—Nothing is said about time, place, or accommodations; doing all things in decency and order, 1 Cor. xiv. 40—no particular manners and customs are appointed to circumscribe decency—no particular views and principles to regulate order—and numberless others. Now when a tender conscientious Christian meets such declaration, his mind is at once excited to discover its import—His eager love and vigilance, ever importunately asking, 'what wilt thou have me to do?' finds that the occasion has arrived which calls for action, for obedience; the necessity is obvious, that something must be done; What is that something? Every man's sober reason will tell him *to do the best his abilities permit, in dependence on the Divine assistance, and in accordance with the general spirit of our Redeemer's Holy Religion.*—

And in so doing, we humbly conceive, he is sanctioned by the same paramount authority, as in the former case, the will of God. If we believe that the *Christian Religion* is from the author of *our nature*, we must believe that there is an entire correspondence between them. It would not be credible, therefore, before hand, that the religion of Christ in some of its parts, is not suited to exercise human judgment, choice and will, which are parts of the constitution himself has given us—parts too, evidently relating to *practice* as well as theory; to cases of *action*, as well as to subjects of thought and investigation, and requiring an appropriate exercise in that character.

The Divine Sovereign in giving his commands, most certainly foreknew every occasion, and all the circumstances in which an obligation to perform them would be felt; and foresaw all the consequences resulting from their performance in this way or that. He as certainly foreknew what would be the force of obligation, with every one of his children; what judgment and choice of means each would be inclined to make, in every possible case—what anxiety he would feel:—Still he places on record his standing command. The case of duty with the individual is precisely the same, as if he stood present before the Deity, when he uttered his command: Knew that God understood his whole judgment and will in regard to its performance, and still heard his awful voice, at which even Moses feared and quaked, bidding him go forward. In such a case, the very utterance of the command would carry along with it the sanction of the designed means; just as a command from a master to his servant respecting any piece of work, would be understood to sanction the doing of it in the usual way, or as had been mutually understood between them, unless particular directions had been given. On this principle, unquestionably, the Apostle Paul interposes with his *advice* to the Corinthians, 2 Cor. viii. 10, respecting the propriety of contributions a year in advance for the relief of the suffering saints—and also respecting the *system* of liberality to be pursued by the churches in Corinth and Galatia, dictated no doubt by propriety, but not prevailing, as we read in other places, 1. Cor. xvi. 1, 2.

2. Our pursuits must be supported by good motives, 1. Cor. x. 31. Let the object of our endeavor be ever so worthy; let the character, attainments, and words of the candidate for Divine approbation, be ever so elevated and astonishing: yet if he hath not charity, if the love of Christ constraineth him not, he is but sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal, 1. Cor. xiii. 1.

3. They must harmonize with our other duties. God can never give contradictory or inconsistent commands. We stand connected with other beings by innumerable relations, from which arise correspondent duties; yet all the cords that bind us, admit of so nice an adjustment, as to keep us in a proper balance and medium. The system itself is not chargeable with our excesses or defects: but our own want of wisdom, power, or will to understand and execute it. Thus, the faith which works by love, and leads to acts of devotion and benevolence, consists with the prudence and affection which provide for one's own household—Ps. cxii. 5—Rom. xii. 13—and 1. Tim. v. 8.

On these acknowledged principles let the convention be tried with

seriousness and candor ; and we are persuaded that the formation of such a body, instead of being cause of regret, will be matter of joy and thankfulness to every devout and unprejudiced mind. As to its objects, there can be no difference of opinion. They are such as are dear to all good men, and to Christ himself. If the best means have not been adopted, which the nature of the case admitted, our error is not wilful ; nor is it visible to us. Is it to be found in the union itself ? What good reason can be shewn why Christians acknowledging one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, should not come together in pious counsel and co-operation ? What was ever effected by solitary exertion ? Is it in the principles which regulate this union ? They are the very same on which the Baptist churches have been associated for centuries ; calling for common counsel and exertions in harmony with respective independence ; principles of equality, of meekness, of holy caution, and of brotherly love. Is it in missions, or in schools ? If the heathen are to be saved, the first and last thought about it hinges on this, that they should hear the word of life, and believe. But how shall they hear without a preacher ? And how shall they preach except they be *sent* to them ? Rom. x. 13, 15. A mission is nothing more than a scheme carried into operation, in which individuals or churches may unite, for *sending* forth the willing ministers of Christ to preach the Gospel. In this sense Paul, Cephas, and other Apostles and the brethren of the Lord, with their companions and families were missionaries, and the churches were their mission societies, 1. Cor. ix. 1, 14—Phil. iv. 10, 18—and Phil. ii. 30, &c. If instruction be necessary, so are reading, study, and mental improvement. What idea have we of the means, but of books and teachers, and time and talents devoted to these objects ? If every youthful Timothy and Titus had a Paul for their patron and instructor, institutions as to them indeed, would be needless. But as this is not the case, and cannot in the nature of things be expected, the convention hopes that a concentration of talents, wisdom and holiness will be useful—a fountain of many precious streams for Zion ; that whether it be at Bethel, or at Jericho, or the banks of Jordan, or in Jerusalem, 2 Kings, ii. 3, 5, and 6, 1—vii. and 22, 14, in this place or in that ; whether it be called a school or a college ; that there, after the example of the prophets, they might offer to the rising gifts of the churches, steadily and impartially, those aids which no effort of their own could supply ; and which many of our venerable fathers, to their sorrow and regret, never enjoyed.

Or will the error be found in the motives which have swayed in forming these places ? It is scarcely supposable that malignity itself could be clamorous on such a subject. It is a concern known only to God and ourselves. But suppose *our* motives wrong, utterly unchristian ; yet if the plans themselves be proper, and on the whole productive of *more good than evil*, they are good plans—our unworthy motives by no means hinder the cordial support and the rich reward of those who are conscious of being under the influence of better feelings.

Or is the lurking evil in the claims which the plans of this convention urge on the benevolence of christians ? Is a small portion of our worldly substance an acknowledgement too great for the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies ? Shall we in sending a message of mercy to wretched man, for our Saviour's sake, be chargeable with prodigality to the friend of sinners, who loved us and gave himself for us ? Will any man that has committed his eternal concerns to Christ, and means

to commend to him, in dying, his widow and fatherless children, believe that those children will ever howl in hungry poverty over his grave—and bewail the activity and benevolence, the contributions, losses, sufferings and privations of their sainted parent in the cause of the eternal God? 'I have been young, said David, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.' Ps. xxxvii. 25.

We are not however, so inexperienced as to imagine that our plans are perfectly free from errors—We hope and believe indeed, that *could they all be seen*, they would not be alarming. Nor do we suppose that conviction will be wrought, by any thing that can be said, on every mind; nor that all amongst us will ever be found favorable to our schemes, till human schemes shall end. Where there is a determination, or even a wish not to be convinced, arguments and appeals are vain. Yet there are many who have already put their hands to the plough, many more among thoughtful and conscientious christians will join them, and we hope and trust, that with becoming zeal and devotion, they will lead forward the work we have but imperfectly begun. To such a co-operation, however, as we are praying for and expecting, several things seem to stand opposed.—Some of which we would take the liberty, with seriousness and affection, to notice.

1. A too general *undervaluing of means*. It is often said, that if God's time for the conversion of the Heathen were come, *He* would send them Bibles and preachers—or if more human learning were necessary to his servants among us, *He* would give it them—and in a similar spirit, in regard to other things—Which strange way of speaking seems to proceed on the presumption, that what is done through the intervention of human agents is not of the Lord's doing. Human agents are God's chief instruments in accomplishing the designs of grace, Luke xvi. 29, 31—Mat. x. 40, &c.—Also Acts, x. 5—and Isa. vi. 8. But because human agents are common, and we every day observe them to act under the influence of laws with which we are familiar, we leave them wholly out of the scheme of Providence. Alas, to what absurdities are we driven! Because God operates commonly, constantly, and uniformly, in a certain channel, we say he does not act at all. The God of our lives has become so frequent a guest as to be disregarded; and the multitude of his own footsteps have wholly obliterated from our view the signs of his going forth. When the wrath of man is made to praise God, though man meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so, Ps. lxxvi. 10—Is. x. 7; the hand of God is visible. Should it not be equally visible in those operations which are originated and directed with a singleness of desire to his glory? The Divine power and authority are not more certainly interposed in the performance of a miracle, than in many ordinary actions, springing in the actors entirely from rational motives. The shipmates of Jonah, consulting their own safety on their own principles, in casting overboard the Lord's absconding Prophet, were acting just as much under Heaven's supreme control, as the fish that transported him to the shore. And may we not believe, that we see just as much of God, when the pious missionary preaching among the Savages, is surrounded by weeping penitents, as if in the wilds where they roam, and where nature's long slumbers have never been broken by the sound of a human voice but their own, God should plant Evangelic tongues in the trees, and in the Tiger's mouth, which should plead with them, in the name of Jesus face to face. All good is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning. If we see any thing good in man, unsound wretched man, therefore, whether in desire, motive or act, God must have put it there.—And whether He shall choose to exercise his sovereignty over his gifts thus bestowed, or shall put forth his arm in any other conceivable way to finish his work in the earth, it is one and the self-same God which filleth all in all.

This undervaluing of means, however, it is to be feared, has its true origin in an unwillingness at heart to be engaged for God. If we admit the utility of means, the question, why do you not use them? would send an arrow, which sticking fast into our fat indulgencies and rotten hopes, would confound us. Our busy natures ever on tiptoe to meet the demands of friendship and of selfishness, would not then be suffered unheedingly to pass by the languishing cause of God. Nor could we in such vacant carelessness, give sleep to our eyes, whilst the claims of bleeding love stood unsatisfied before us. Oh brethren, it is Jesus that calls us to labor for him; and though we may have long refused, yet now let us repent and go, using the ability which God hath given, Mat. xxi. 29—and 1 Pet. iv. 11.

2. The want of just views on the improvement of ministerial gifts and qualifica-

tions. It is often argued that each minister is to infer his field of labor, and his probable fruits, from the state of information he is in, when called ; and that it is supplying needless furniture which God designed should remain unsupplied, in his case, to strive for an education afterwards. Before this can be of weight, it must be shown, that his obligations *to improve his talents* are dissolved ; which would require an express and immediate revelation from God, since the same power is requisite to dissolve an obligation as to create one ; and which would, of course, disqualify him altogether for the service of God :—And also, it must be proven that ignorance better fits a man to be a public instructor and guide, in some circumstances, than knowledge. Our unlettered brethren who have arrived at usefulness and distinction, have been pained with the incumbrances of their untutored lot. Their extraordinary parts, and the power of Divine Grace, have borne them along ; not indeed without the aids of knowledge, but by enabling them to seize those aids where others could not, and in a degree impossible in the same circumstances, to more contracted abilities ; extracting honey from the rock. It would be strange reasoning, therefore, to say that the same aids furnished with a more liberal hand, in the ordinary way, are not equally valuable.

Some measure of human learning is evidently indispensable to every Minister. All the true and solid knowledge of every kind, which our brethren have tried, they have found some way or other useful to them, in the discharge of their sacred functions. Would it not then be stranger reasoning still, to say, that because so much as has been tried has proven good and useful, all the untried parts must therefore be needless or positively hurtful ? Much more rational was the answer of an enlightened heathen, who, being asked his opinion of a book that had been lent him, replied, “all that I understand of it I find is excellent, and therefore conclude that the remainder is equally good.”

But it seems to us to be stranger than all, how it ever came to be thought, that a man deserves commendation, as acting rationally, and fulfilling a part at least of the design of his creation, when in the service of the devil, his restless appetite is ever on edge to devour every scrap of knowledge that comes in his way ; whilst the very moment that he makes a consecration of his time and talents, and attainments, to the living God, he must put a stern interdiction on his faculties to advance no further, and refuse to God the offering he would have made to the adversary, but for sovereign love. How could it ever have been supposed, that what we may have laid up from motives of personal gratification, or worldly aggrandizement, can be advantageously employed in the service of God ; but that what we may acquire with a view to his glory in the salvation of men, and under the guidance of his Holy Spirit, is so unavailing, that the very endeavour would be disobedience, the acquirement an abomination ? Thus did not our Great Master act, who, after calling his Apostles, sent them not forth fully to preach his Gospel—but retained them about his own person, and under his own matchless instructions for three years. The Apostle to the Gentiles fully understood the meaning and force of this example, and transcribed it into his own history—for when he was old and dying, just ready to be offered up, we find him sending to Timothy for his books and parchments. 2Tim. iv. 13.

3. The want of a proper acquaintance with the history of benevolent exertions—with the persons connected with them, and with the exigencies of our present condition. Would we take a little pains to be informed of the success which has followed the labors of our Brethren, in plans similar to our own : would we come together on the common ground of the Gospel, enter into each other's views and feelings and characters ; and then bring near the alarming spectacle of our present need ; suspicions, jealousies, and indifference would vanish. But while we stand aloof from each other, and from correct information ; sowing our windy fears in a suspicious heart, and reaping the whirlwinds of imaginary ill that may grow out of what our brethren are doing for God, our destitution will never be removed.

4. We do not rightly consider our mutual relations and duties as individuals, and as churches in union.

The Scriptures speak of this endearing subject in the most interesting terms ; borrowing nature's most perfect images. They consider us as members of one affectionate family, or as members of the same human body ; nay, as parts or members one of another. Eph. iii. 15. 1 Cor. xii. 27. Rom. xii. 5. And the things intended by these figures had so great an effect on the minds of the early disciples, that they were of one heart and of one soul ; neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common, Acts,

iv. 32. Among the churches also, such a harmony of sentiment and operation prevailed, as to maintain a just apportionment of their liberality toward the advancement of the Gospel, and an equal exchange of mutual kindness. 2 Cor. viii. 13, 14. These relations are perpetual; and the union ought to subsist, in all its essential qualities, among us—*of which there is great need.* Some churches have members of piety and talents, who, oft times feel the word of the Lord as fire in their bones; but 'who from a just consciousness of their deficiency in knowledge are deterred from entering on the work of winning souls, even for the want of that aid which others are able to bestow. We appeal to the churches, to the individuals themselves, on whose broken hearts the spirit of the Lord has written that awful word, 'Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel,' if these things are not so. Should there not be an exchange in this business? Ought we not to loose the fetters of these poor prisoners, whom ignorance hath bound perhaps many years, and send them forth to proclaim the everlasting Gospel? The more we think of it, brethren, the more we love the scheme in which the Lord has engaged us. It is designed to benefit the poor; to call them from their uneasy hiding-places, and put them upon the arduous pursuit of a crown of many stars in Heaven—preaching the Gospel, like their Divine Master, to the poor again. And oh! if we shall have been the instrument of reclaiming to his master's work one fleeing Jonah, the consequences will be inestimable, until eternity reveal them.

5. We have not sufficiently learned to live on the authority and faithfulness of God's holy word. We are ever in danger of supposing that *appearances* in Providence—that the evidence of sense or reason—that signs and wonders secure our hopes more firmly than the bare word of Him that cannot lie. And especially in the management of our temporal concerns do we suppose, that we must contract every benevolent expenditure, stifle every charitable emotion, and hold every gift of God's bounty with closed and gripping hands, in order to 'provide things honest in the sight of all men.' We have not faith enough to believe the promises of that word, in which it is impossible for God to lie, and which endureth forever. If had, how should we vie with each other, in holy emulation, to secure its reward.

That word collects the amount which benevolence scatters, and notes it down a loan unto the Lord. And that which he hath given, shall he not pay him again. Prov. xix. 17. Were a friend to ask the loan of any reasonable amount, the favor would be cheerfully bestowed. But our distrustful economy will not suffer us to lend on the standing promise of the living God.

That word assures the benevolent not only of an equitable recompense, Mat. x. 42, but of a bountiful multiplication. 2 Cor. ix. 6. Gal. vi. 8. He that soweth sparingly, shall also reap sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully. In the utmost scarcity of provisions, would not every prudent man save something from his scanty subsistence, *for seed*? And from whom cometh the increase? Are not the heavens and the earth the Lord's, and the fulness thereof? The clouds, the winds, the hail, the pestilence, and death, are every moment under his supreme control? Is it not the Lord that maketh poor, and that maketh rich; that bringeth low, and that lifteth up? 1 Sam. ii. 7. And does it become us, is it reason, is it interest, to withhold from Him who giveth all things, the required offering of worldly substance. The widow of Zarephath and her only son, themselves the withered remnants of starving nature, resigned at God's command, their *last* handful of meal and cruse of oil, which they were just preparing; that they might eat and die; 'and the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which He spake by Elijah.' 1 Kings, 17 chap. Wherefore, let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. Gal. vi. 9.

With cordial affection and respect, we remain, beloved brethren,
Yours, in Gospel bonds,

BASIL MANLY, *Secretary.*

RICHARD FURMAN, *President.*